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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 18 October 2006, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Mammadov (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Azerbaijan)
later: Mr. Dhakal (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Nepal)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Saha

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In the absence of Mr. Yousfi (Algeria), Mr. Mammadov (Azerbaijan), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 118: Programme planning (*continued*) (A/61/6 (Part one and Progs. 1-27), A/61/16, A/61/64, A/61/83 and Corr.1 and A/61/125)

1. **Ms. Kumar** (Canada), speaking also on behalf of Australia and New Zealand, said that, although the budget and planning process could be further improved, the biennial approach to programme planning had proven practical and effective. While her delegation did not wish to redo the work of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), Member States had a responsibility to ensure that both the proposed programme plan and the amendments thereto were well founded. She would therefore be seeking clarification of the policy basis for some of the proposed amendments, as well as of their ramifications, in informal consultations.

2. Referring to programme 24 (Management and support services), she expressed surprise and disappointment that the Secretariat had deleted the reference to improved business processes from the list of expected accomplishments for 2008-2009. In response to concerns over that issue, in 2004 the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to develop a time-bound plan for the reduction of duplication, complexity and bureaucracy in United Nations administrative processes. The Secretary-General's proposal on information technology renewal (A/60/846/Add.1) had addressed the question, so that new systems did not merely computerize poor processes, and the General Assembly had provided the necessary resources. She therefore requested clarification of the timetable and methodology for the business process review.

3. Given the large number of administrative functions included under the regular budget, the absence of performance management tools had long been a source of concern. Accordingly, while she was disappointed that the Secretariat had sought to delete the provision mandated by the General Assembly relating to the development of ways of assessing efficiency and productivity in key management and service functions, she welcomed the proposal for the reintroduction of those requirements submitted by the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

4. At its forty-fourth session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination had recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to develop improved tools for identifying the cost of activities and outputs and report to the Assembly at its sixtieth session on options for applying cost-accounting techniques. The General Assembly had approved an additional appropriation in the amount of US$ 500,000 for that purpose. However, no report had been forthcoming. It was imperative to have a view of how to proceed on that issue when planning a new information technology system.

5. Unfortunately, some of the amendments proposed by the Committee for Programme and Coordination were retrograde. In particular, the proposed change to paragraph 24.3 of programme 24 would limit management reform to those measures approved by the General Assembly, which seemed to restrict the Secretary-General's prerogative to take action under Article 97 of the Charter. Moreover, in its desire to avoid using the term "best practice(s)", the Committee had deleted from programme 24 the most important reference to improving internal controls. She was also deeply concerned about the proposal to include in subprogramme 3 (Human resources management) an objective relating to equitable geographical representation which did not comply with the provisions of Article 101 of the Charter.

6. In conclusion, she noted that the Committee for Programme and Coordination had once again failed to respond to the repeated requests of the General Assembly to improve its working methods. The lack of progress on that front was illustrative of the broader challenge facing CPC, namely, to determine how its work could add real value.

7. **Mr. Bhakta** (India) reaffirmed the importance of the Committee for Programme and Coordination as the main subsidiary organ of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly devoted to planning, programming and coordination. CPC played a fundamental role in ensuring that United Nations programmes adhered to the letter and spirit of the legislative mandates given to the Organization by Member States and also identified programmatic changes arising from decisions taken by intergovernmental bodies. Furthermore, it was the only

intergovernmental body within the United Nations that facilitated coordination among the various institutions and mandates.

8. However, the Committee for Programme and Coordination must perform its mandated tasks in an efficient and effective manner, and should strive for improvement through self-evaluation. Accordingly, he welcomed CPC's efforts to improve its working methods within the framework of its mandate, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions. He expressed support for the Chairman's informal paper on that subject, since it provided a substantive set of proposals that enjoyed the broadest possible agreement of CPC, and urged all Member States to work together on that issue in future.

9. He endorsed the conclusions and recommendations contained in the CPC report, in particular those contained in paragraphs 52 and 53, and, with reference to the programme performance report (A/61/64), welcomed the increased overall implementation rate.

10. The annual overview report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) was an important and useful tool, and CEB should pursue its efforts to promote a culture of cooperation among United Nations system organizations, particularly those involved in implementing the development agenda. The Board should continue to attach the highest priority to ensuring the effectiveness and coordination of the United Nations system support for Africa and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). His delegation unequivocally supported all efforts to strengthen support for NEPAD, and endorsed the request concerning the full provision of resources to the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa. The United Nations system constituted a crucial pillar in the advocacy for and delivery of international support to Africa, and the various components of that system should make greater efforts to work together to ensure the proper utilization of resources.

11. Lastly, referring to the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives (A/61/83 and Corr.1), he underlined the importance of evaluation and expressed regret that it seemed to be accorded low priority within the Secretariat. That situation must be rectified. He looked forward to the submission of the in-depth and thematic evaluations detailed in paragraphs 369 and 370 of the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

12. **Mr. Kozaki** (Japan) reiterated his delegation's scepticism about the effectiveness and relevance of the work of the Committee for Programme and Coordination and recalled that Japan had dissociated itself from the consensus adoption of that body's report. The discussions of the Committee for Programme and Coordination had merely repeated issues that had already been debated in other intergovernmental forums. Furthermore, the outcome of those discussions had failed to live up to expectations and some of the Committee's recommendations overstepped its mandate.

13. When drafting chapter II, section A, of its report, the Committee had not made use of the programme performance report contained in document A/61/64. In that connection, he urged Member States to refer to Economic and Social Council resolution 2008 (LX), General Assembly resolution 59/275 and paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 60/257. He was unsure whether the conclusions and recommendations contained in paragraphs 31 to 35 of the Committee's report provided any useful input to the work of the General Assembly.

14. The recommendation contained in paragraph 52 of the report was puzzling: why should the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to revise the plan outline? In addition, the time frame and venue for the review referred to in paragraph 53 were unclear. More generally, it would be almost impossible for Japan to support the recommendations and conclusions relating to individual programme narratives because no justification was provided. Moreover, the Committee seemed to have overstepped its mandate in requesting additional resources.

15. With regard to chapter II, section C, of the report, he recalled that regulation 7.1 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2000/8) specified the objective of evaluation. However, the Committee's discussion of the related OIOS reports tended to focus on the way in which programmes were implemented rather than on the

impact of the Organization's activities in relation to their objectives. In that connection, he also had doubts about the topics selected by CPC for future in-depth evaluations. In its resolution 58/269, the General Assembly had invited the Committee for Programme and Coordination to submit proposals on enhancing its role in monitoring and evaluation, but it had not yet done so. The failure of CPC to link monitoring and evaluation with programming was cause for concern.

16. Referring to chapter III of the report, he said that, as far as he could remember, the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the report of CEB and on the reports on NEPAD had never been taken up by the General Assembly under the relevant agenda items. Furthermore, although the annual overview report of CEB for 2005-2006 had been submitted to the Economic and Social Council as well as to the Committee for Programme and Coordination, no attempt had been made to coordinate the two bodies' discussions of it. Despite its role as the main subsidiary organ of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly for planning, programming and coordination, the Committee's deliberations on coordination questions made no contribution to the work of its parent bodies. In fact, the Committee appeared to be behaving as though it were an independent intergovernmental body.

17. Chapter IV of the report, which dealt with improving CPC's working methods, contained no information worth reporting to the General Assembly, since the Committee had once again failed to respond to the Assembly's requests. Accordingly, the General Assembly should consider the more fundamental issue of the effectiveness and relevance of the Committee's work rather than concentrating on improving its working methods and procedures within the framework of its mandate.

18. Each Member State must draw its own conclusions about the work of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, but he would be deeply disappointed if the majority of Member States were satisfied with it. While it would be easy to maintain the status quo, the energy currently devoted to the Committee would be better expended elsewhere.

19. **Mr. Yaroshevich** (Belarus) said that General Assembly resolution 60/257 attested to the important role of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, whose mandate was well founded, firm and supported by the overwhelming majority of Member States. His delegation welcomed the conclusions and recommendations contained in the Committee's report, especially those relating to programmes 1, 7, 10, 11 and 13. However, further attention must be paid to Africa's development and, in that regard, his delegation underlined the important coordinating role of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa. That Office, as well as the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), should be strengthened in order to coordinate the contributions of United Nations agencies to NEPAD.

20. Referring to the programme performance report, his delegation was pleased that the overall implementation rate had increased from 85 per cent in 2002-2003 to 91 per cent in 2004-2005. That increase reflected improvements in programme planning, and the Committee for Programme and Coordination had continued to move in the right direction by proposing an efficient strategic framework for the period 2008-2009. With regard to the latter's working methods, Belarus supported the informal paper submitted by the Chairman.

21. **Ms. Poku** (Ghana) said that the broad agreement reached by the Committee for Programme and Coordination with regard to its working methods would provide a good basis for further discussion. She underscored the valuable role played by CPC in ensuring that the Secretariat correctly translated legislative mandates into programmes.

22. At its last session CPC had reviewed the proposed plan outline for the biennium 2008-2009. It had likewise examined the reports of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) (E/2006/66) and the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (E/AC.51/2006/6). In that regard, she urged the Chief Executives Board to stress the importance of system-wide support for the implementation of the objectives of NEPAD. She also supported the strengthening of the roles of the Economic Commission for Africa and the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa with a view to coordinating contributions by United Nations agencies to NEPAD and assisting in the implementation of the partnership at the regional and global levels.

23. **Mr. Rashkow** (United States of America) said that his delegation had always believed in the potential

of the Committee for Programme and Coordination to carefully scrutinize the Organization's activities with a view to eliminating duplication, overlap and inefficiencies. His delegation also, however, placed a high premium on reform, and regretted that despite three General Assembly resolutions, 58/269, 59/275 and 60/257, calling on CPC to reform its working methods, it had been unable to reach a consensus on that matter. The proposals contained in the informal paper prepared by the Chairman offered little in terms of reform, and his delegation was unable to support it.

24. Given CPC's failure to carry out the mandates of the General Assembly to improve its working methods, his delegation had felt it necessary to dissociate itself from its report and could not endorse it. Although it was critical to have some form of central coordinating mechanism to guarantee efficiency, his delegation believed that, given CPC's lack of progress with regard to its working methods and overlap of its role with that of the Fifth Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), it was time for the Fifth Committee to consider whether the Committee for Programme and Coordination should continue to exist.

25. **Mr. Andanje** (Kenya) said his delegation attached great importance to the work of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, which enjoyed overwhelming support from Member States. It should be strengthened to enable it to carry out its mandate more effectively. Questioning the role and usefulness of such an important intergovernmental body was unacceptable. His delegation welcomed the report of CPC (A/61/16) and the progress made towards improving its working methods, despite differences of opinion. CPC had fulfilled the mandate given it by the General Assembly in that regard and had also achieved broad consensus on its conclusions and recommendations.

26. With regard to programme 27 (Safety and security), in particular, he welcomed the support given and the merging of the two previous subprogrammes into one subprogramme. He commended the Department of Safety and Security for its efforts to enhance safety and security at United Nations facilities. As host to the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON), his delegation reaffirmed its commitment to the protection of United Nations personnel and property and looked forward to continued strengthening of the partnership between the Department and his Government.

27. **Mr. Farooq** (Pakistan) said that a number of key areas had not been adequately covered in the proposed strategic framework and that the plan outline did not reflect the Organization's longer-term objectives. The plan outline should take account of past experience for the purposes of institutional capacity-building and effective programme delivery. In the case of the biennial programme plan, his delegation stressed the importance of the inputs of specialized intergovernmental bodies. The indicators of achievement did not always reflect the targets and some of them concentrated over much on the quantity of work while neglecting quality.

28. The programme implementation rate of 91 per cent for 2004-2005 was a matter for satisfaction but the rate should be further improved; the electronic version of the programme performance report was useful. The recommendation for a more introspective and analytical approach deserved support.

29. The OIOS report (A/61/83) was informative about the critical role of programme evaluation, which seemed to enjoy only low priority, especially with respect to staffing capacity. In order to enhance accountability managers should adopt the best self-evaluation practices. His delegation supported the improvements proposed by OIOS, in particular the identification of specific evaluation needs, functions, resources and capacities.

30. He reaffirmed the importance of CPC: its recommendations provided a sold basis for the Fifth Committee's work on programme and planning. CPC had spent much time on consideration of the General Assembly's request for improvement of its working methods, but given the divergence of views the achievement of consensus would require flexibility on all sides.

31. **Mr. Berti Oliva** (Cuba) stressed the importance of the work done by the Committee for Programme and Coordination, especially at a time of reform of the Organization. He regretted that some delegations that were not members of the Committee and therefore had not been privy to the discussions that had led to the adoption of the Committee's recommendations had chosen to criticize certain of those recommendations.

32. Although he, too, regretted that no consensus had yet been reached with regard to reform of CPC's working methods, the progress made showed that a positive result was possible. To some extent the lack of progress could be attributed to the decision of some

delegations not to participate in the deliberations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, which testified to their lack of interest in CPC and reform of its methods and, in one case at least, the desire to eliminate it. His delegation would oppose any attempt to eliminate CPC. Reform of the methods of work of CPC was the task of that Committee and should not be considered by the Fifth Committee.

33. He fully supported the recommendations contained in the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, which provided a sound basis for review of all programmes in preparation for discussion of the budget for the next biennium. His delegation would continue to work constructively with other delegations to ensure that CPC fulfilled its mandate.

34. **Ms. Lock** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that although the Group supported the right of all Member States to express their opinions or participate or not in specific discussions, it was unfortunate that in the current situation, where a majority of Member States supported the work of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, non-participation had been used to argue against the usefulness of CPC and for its elimination.

35. Turning to the plan outline, she noted that CPC had recognized that the outline did not reflect all the long-term outcomes of the World Summit 2005 and all other mandates of the Organization. It would not be possible for the Secretariat to prepare a revised outline before the adoption of the report of CPC by the General Assembly, which would have to decide whether to request the Secretariat to prepare a revised outline at the current session. Perhaps the Fifth Committee should ask the Secretariat to indicate when such a revision could be undertaken given the importance of receiving the results as soon as possible.

36. With regard to evaluation, she recalled the responsibility of intergovernmental bodies, management and oversight bodies in that regard. Given the lack of proper self-evaluation capability within the Secretariat, however, the Office of Internal Oversight Services performed certain evaluation functions for the Secretariat. It was unfair to blame one intergovernmental body for any failings with regard to evaluation in the Secretariat. The evaluation system as a whole should be reviewed.

37. The usefulness of the Committee for Programme and Coordination had been called into question because it had not discussed certain agenda items, but it was the responsibility of the General Committee to allocate agenda items. With regard to the Chief Executives Board for Coordination and NEPAD, she recalled that the Fifth Committee had adopted the relevant recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination the previous year and she welcomed the continuing focus on those issues.

38. She did not understand comments referring to overlapping of the work of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the Fifth Committee and the Advisory Committee for Administrative and Budgetary Questions. That issue could perhaps be discussed further. It was important for the Committee for Programme and Coordination to interact with managers with regard to programme implementation, and to draw the attention of the General Assembly to situations where inadequate resources affected programme delivery. Although the Committee for Programme and Coordination did not have a mandate to make allocations or estimates of resources needed, the issues of availability of resources and successful programme delivery were inextricably linked.

39. She expressed surprise at criticism of the failure of CPC to reach agreement on a revision of its working methods. As requested by the General Assembly, in-depth discussion of the issue had taken place and she expressed satisfaction that a majority of CPC members had been able to reach agreement. Progress was often a step-by-step process, and the lack of consensus did not negate the results of the discussions. In her view CPC had certainly fulfilled the mandate given it by the General Assembly to reform its working methods. She looked forward to further progress on the issue.

40. CPC could not be asked to explain every recommendation it made, especially at a time when the Organization was trying to streamline its functioning. CPC's mandate was to review how the Secretariat translated legislative mandates into programmes, to ensure there was a legislative basis for programme elements, and to make recommendations accordingly. Regarding programme 24, she welcomed the recommendations made by CPC, including with regard to equitable geographic distribution and representation, as reflecting the wishes of the General Assembly. The Group of 77 and China was ready to listen to any proposals and hoped the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination would be adopted by consensus.

41. **Mr. Safaei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation endorsed the comments made by the representatives of Pakistan and Cuba. The role of CPC was to ensure that the Secretariat carried out its mandate accurately with regard to programmes and other activities. The CPC recommendations deserved strong support: CPC must be maintained, for it provided the only opportunity for governmental input to the work of the General Assembly.

42. **Mr. Afifi** (Egypt) said that his delegation reaffirmed the importance of CPC as the Organization's main subsidiary organ for the coordination of institutional mandates. At its forty-sixth session CPC had made commendable efforts to improve its working methods, and its Chairman's informal paper on the subject deserved support. Any reform was an evolving process, and in the present case the need for reform of the Organization emphasized in turn the need for CPC.

43. **Mr. Ren** Yisheng (China) said that CPC had played a very important role in programme planning and coordination. The Chinese delegation endorsed the recommendations contained in the CPC report and noted the action taken for reform of its working methods. Reform was a gradual process, and all Member States should continue to have confidence in CPC and give it support and guidance.

44. **Mr. Diab** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation also reaffirmed the importance of CPC and welcomed its report and recommendations. The Chairman's informal paper on improvement of working methods deserved support.

45. *Mr. Dhakal (Nepal), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

46. **Mr. Kozaki** (Japan) said that in order to avoid any confusion his delegation wished to stress that the arguments made in its earlier statement had been based on paragraph 41 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 32/197 and on paragraphs 628 and 629 of the CPC report on the work of its thirty-ninth session (A/54/16).

47. **Ms. Taylor Roberts** (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination) said that it would be better for most of the issues raised during the discussion to be taken up in informal negotiations. However, where accountability was concerned she wished to stress that CPC had been responding to the requests made in the relevant General Assembly resolutions. Resolution 60/257, for example, called on CPC to review its working methods but without having a negative impact on the other matters on its agenda, in particular the proposed strategic framework. CPC had done precisely that: it had successfully concluded its consideration of 26 out of 27 programmes and had reached broad consensus on the improvement of its working methods; the latter discussion had not been conducted on the basis of proposals for changes to the CPC mandate.

48. **Ms. Van Buerle** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that the business process review was an integral part of the enterprise resource planning system approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 60/283. It would be considered in that context, and a report would be submitted to the General Assembly early in 2007. The cost-accounting study also fell within the context of the planning system. The matter had been drawn to the attention of the Bureau of the Fifth Committee: the study could not be submitted to the Committee for consideration before the resumed session in 2007.

49. The plan outline had been given broad consideration by programme managers and had been reviewed by the Management Committee. As to its revision by the Secretariat, every effort was being made to take into consideration the 2005 World Summit Outcome and to incorporate the mandates emanating from other forums. The Secretariat would welcome guidance from the Committee concerning specific gaps in the outline.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.